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ABSTRACT

Exemplar texts of major intellectual communities in comparative education and social science discourse are examined in order to identify and compare defining characteristics in ways of knowing, credible knowledge, favored problems, metaphors, terms, and the like. The following communities are compared: positivist; dialectical materialist; critical theorist; interactionist; interpretivist; and poststructuralist/postmodernist. Convergent trends across communities are also identified by noting recent adaptations and new communities including, but not limited to, the following: (1) critical realist/neo-positivist; (2) feminist; (3) neo-functionalist; (4) neo-marxist; and (5) postmodern pragmatist. It is argued that, given the wide spectrum of ways of knowing and the growing pluralism in the social sciences, several recent attempts to reduce epistemological diversity in comparative education are noteworthy (i.e., the call for creation of a positivist orthodoxy, and its mirror image call for a holistic/interpretive orthodoxy). Because epistemology is most usefully viewed as a tool to deal with reality, scholars in comparative education may want to consider an ecumenical orientation that favors heterogenicity, open textuality, and tolerance for different ways of knowing. Three figures illustrate the discussion. A 210-item list of references is included. (SLD)

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Comparing Ways of Knowing Across Inquiry Communities: Implications for Comparative Education

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ABSTRACT

Exemplar texts of major [illegible] communities in comparative education and social scie[illegible]rse are examined in order to identify and compare defining characteristics in ways of knowing, credible knowledge, favored problems, metaphors, terms, and the like. Communities compared are the positivist, dialectical materialist, critical theorist, interactionist, interpretivist, and poststructuralist/postmodernist (See Figure 1).

Convergent trends across communities are also identified and discussed by noting recent emergent adaptations and new communities, characterized as critical realist/neopositivist, feminist, neofunctionalist, neomarxist, and among others, the postmodern pragmatists (See Figure 2). Other new approaches--i.e., the micro-macro, rational choice, exchange theory, and dialogism are also noted but not discussed in this work.

I contend that given such fluorescence in ways of knowing and growing pluralism in the social sciences, several recent attempts to reduce epistemological diversity in comparative education are noteworthy. One attempt calls for a return to the failed scientism of the 1960's, for the creation of a positivist orthodoxy that disdains and excludes inquiry traditions of the holistic/inter-

pretive community (Psacharopoulos, 1990). The other attempt is a mirror-image call for a holistic/interpretive orthodoxy that rejects the larger scientific, positivist inquiry community as passé and fated to "...crumble just as the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe have crumbled in the face of popular demand for freedom of expression" (Masemann, 1990: 472).

By creating a traditional ontological dualism of realist versus relativist orientations--one might even say patriarchal versus matriarchal, both advocates claim a world view and vocabulary that is closer to reality. Yet as the continuum of ways of knowing presented in Figure 1 indicates, different vocabularies serve different purposes, and clearly no purpose is closer to reality than another purpose. Ways of knowing are not privileged languages or representations of some truth or reality "out there". Rather, epistemology is perhaps most usefully viewed as a tool to deal with reality, with human needs and interests within and between quite diverse intellectual communities.

Accordingly, I see arguments to enshrine one way of knowing and to exclude others as arbitrary, ritualistic, and seemingly ignorant of interplay. They fail to recognize this dynamic interplay of inquiry and discourse, both within and across intellectual communities and world cultures, a dialectic that is becoming a defining characteristic of our time with its disintegration of separate domains and burgeoning new communal life at the margins (See Figure 3).

I conclude that scholars in comparative education may want to consider an ecumenical orientation, a paradigm of mutual understanding that favors heterogeneity, open textuality, and a tolerance for the other.

Figure 1: The Epistemological Continuum Across Dominant Intellectual Communities

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS:	POSITIVISTS (G. Psacharapoulos, 1990)	DIALECTICAL MATERIALISTS (F. Youngman, 1986)	CRITICAL THEORISTS (H. Giroux, 1988)	SOCIAL INTERACTIONISTS (N. Denzin, 1987)	INTERPRETIVISTS (V. Masemann, 1990)	POST STRUCTURALISTS/MODERNISTS (C. Cherryholms, 1988)
Ways of knowing	experimental verification	dialectical reduction and correspondence	critical reasoning	empathetic interaction	ethnography/ narrative	paralogy
Credible knowledge	nomothetic empirical science	nomothetic marxist science	critique and dialogue	experience	constructed	simulations
Researcher's role	detached observer	politically committed	teacher-emancipator	participant observer	participant observer	provocateur
Favored metaphor	"mirroring nature"	social evolution	liberation	society	culture	commodification
Notion of being	realist	materialism	hermeneutic	emergent	intersubjective	mythic
Inquiry goal	prediction & control	politically "correct analysis"	individual & social change	problem solving	Verstehen	tolerance of incommensurable
Educational goal	curriculum content	political commitment	consciousness raising	social role	cultural knowledge	culture & social sensitization
School knowledge products	P. Foster, Education and social cnange in Ghana (1968).	R. Altenbaugh, Education for struggle (1990).	R. Eberhart, Reading, writing & resistance (1983).	P. Cusick, Inside high school (1973).	J. Ogbu, The next generation (1974).	P. McLaren, Schooling as a ritual performance (1986).

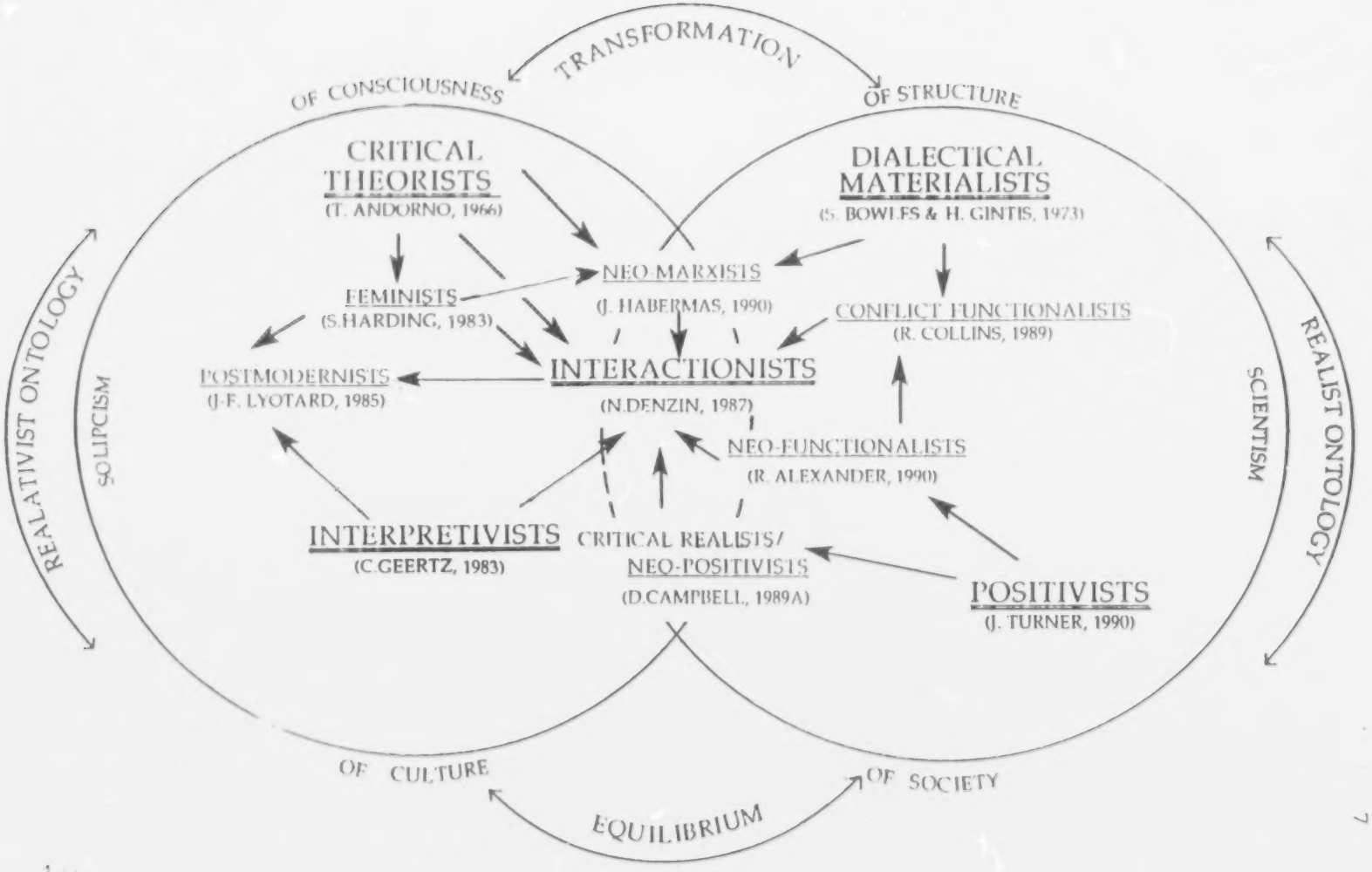
Source: Texts cited

Figure 2: Emergent Dedifferentiation and Convergence of Intellectual Communities

Critical Realist/ NeoPositivists	Neofunctionalists	Neomarxists	Feminists	Postmodern Pragmatists
Enlarges positivist science to include hermeneutics (D. Campbell, 1980)	Links structural theory to ethnomethodological ideas to create a synthesis between conflict, functionalist, and micro-interactionist traditions (R. Collins, 1988)	Shifts explanatory focus from the economy to the state as the principal force in shaping "transitional" societies (V. Randall & R. Theobald, 1988; M. Carnoy & J. Samoff, 1990)	Supersedes male marxist & neo-marxist theories with female views & experiences vis-a-vis critique & change (S. Harding, 1983; Lengerman, 1990).	Avoids epistemiological distinctions, ie., science vs. culture, and neutral criteria; advocates constant experimental reformulation Rorty, 1991)
Grounds, educational planning in positivist & interpretive inquiry approaches (D. Adams, 1988)	Critical revision of Parsonian functionalism to evolve a neofunctional i.e., a multidimensional perspective combining "strong points of Parsons and Habermas" (J. Alexander & P. Colomy, 1990)	Incorporates Parsons & social interactionism (i.e., G. H. Mead) into critical theory's quest for communicative action (Habermas, 1991; H. Joas, 1985)	Feminist epistemology moves to "mutuality of recognition" between positivism & the radical relativism of postmodernism (R. Bleir, 1986)	Seeks to shift interactionist theory from micro-i.e., individual, to macro, i.e., collectivist level (Lewis & Smith, 1980)
Convergence of interactionist work on public negotiation & neo-functionalist theory of public political process for "a nonmarxist critical theory" (Sciulli, 1988)	Development of action theory synthesizing subjective interests of actors and systems via micro-macro linkage (P. Blau; J. Coleman, 1987)	Increases emphasis on human agency in structural transformation concerns (A. Giddens, 1989); M. Ginsburg, et al., 1990)	Rejects claims of objective science and argues for a gendered epistemology of "inter-viewing" where researcher and subject engage in a mutual process of discovery for emergent knowledge" (E. Fox Keller, 1985; D. Haraway, 1988)	Connects social interactionist community with postmodernism and radical feminism (N. Denzin, 1988; P. Clough, 1989)
Combines ethnographic & experimental methods in educational evaluation (J. Maxwell, 1986)	Elaborates a more critical functionalism using parallels between Marx & Parsons (J. Turner, 1979)	Builds upon Marx's "historical holism" & rejects his materialist emancipatory modernism (R. Antonio, 1989)	Explains why phenomenological sociology is currently undergoing "a progressive concretization" (J. Hardin, 1986)	The problem is not changing consciousness, but detaching the power of truth from hegemonic forms and institutions (M. Foucault, 1980)
Merges realist and relativist perspectives in practice (M. Patton, 1988)	Advances Weberian concern for both cause and meaning in explanation using present diversity and developments in computers and statistics (i.e., causal), and emergence of semiotic and linguistic models (i.e., meaning) (T. Fararo, 1989; G. Jasso, 1988)	Replaces Marx's historical holism, functionalism, and teleology with game theory, rational choice theory, general equilibrium theory, and mathematical modeling techniques from neoclassical economics to elaborate the "microfoundations" of macro processes (A. Carling, 1986; J. Elster, 1986; J. Roemer, 1986)		Argues for "justice of multiplicities" and more modest and pragmatic notions of social & political change (J. F. Lyotard & J. L. Theabaust, 1985)
Presents a positivist synthesis of statistical macro structuralism and praxiological or micro interactionist positivism (J. Turner, 1990)				

Source: Texts cited

Figure 3: A Heuristic "Map" of Dominant and Emergent Intellectual Communities



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